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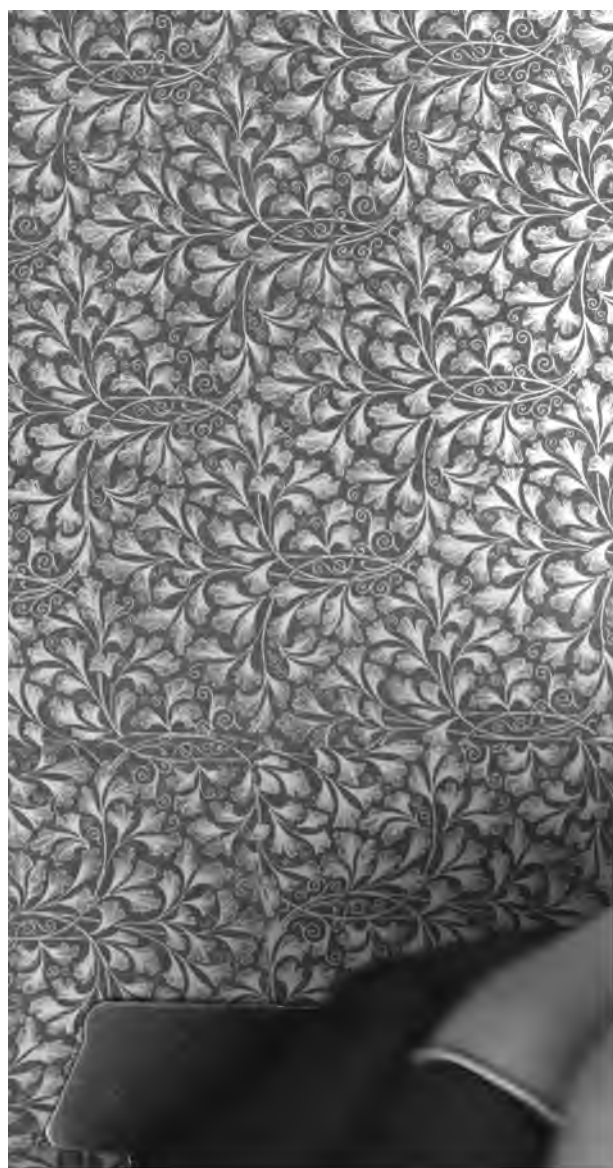
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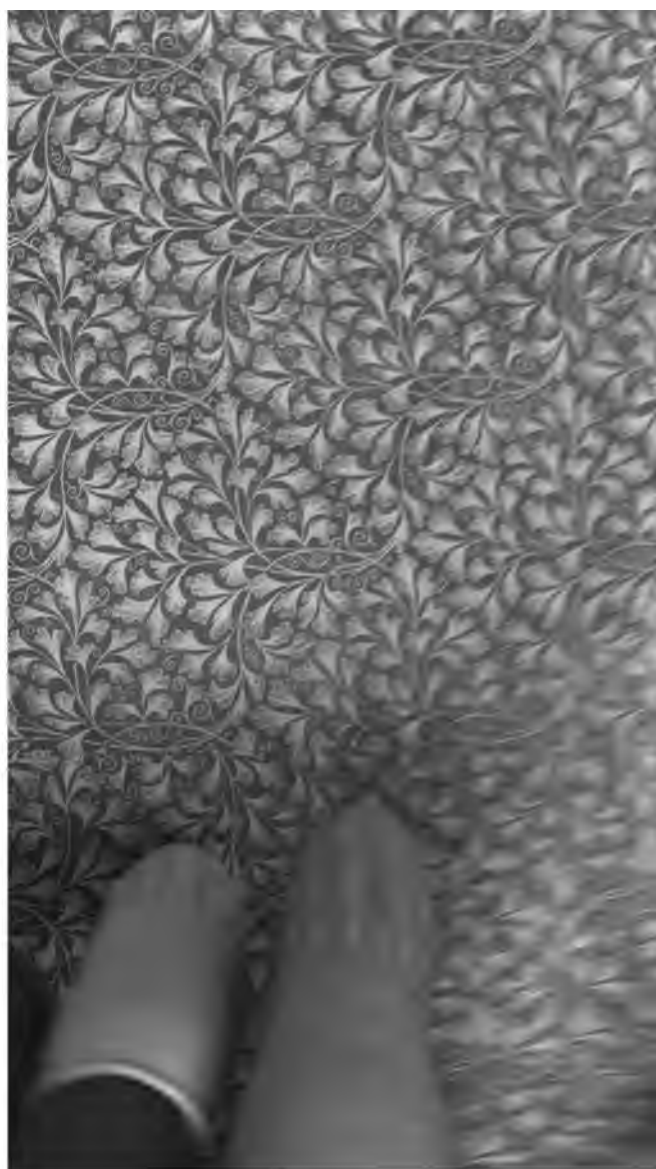
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GEORGE TOWNSEND, M.A.







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HERE AND HEREAFTER:

SOME SERMONS ON
THE ENDLESS LIFE;

BY

GEORGE TUGWELL, M.A., OXON.,

RECTOR OF BATHWICK.

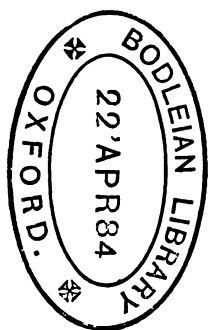
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PREFACE.



THESE SERMONS, preached at S. Mary's, Bathwick, at various times, are connected by a central thought, on which, like beads on a string, they depend.

That thought is the continuity of the endless life.

Human life is a unity, not a duality, or a trilogy. We do not live two lives—those of earth and heaven, or three lives—those of earth, paradise, and heaven, but one life.

No man ever dies ; he only loses for a time the encasement or shrine of his body.

From the moment of birth there is no escaping from life : we must “ go on for ever.”

Death is a gate between earth and the spirit world :

the resurrection is a gate between the spirit world and the world of heaven.

That which a man is as he touches each gate, that same is he when he has passed through each gate. His place is changed, his conditions of life are changed, but his ideal, his aspirations, and his identity are unchanged.

Whatever change is needful must take place on the road to each gate.

Wherefore it is good to lead, so far as may be, the Heavenly Life *now*.

I.—HEAVEN.

REVELATIONS IV. 1 :

"A door was opened in heaven."



DOOR is a barrier which often separates two very unlike scenes.

On one side, for instance, are green fields, and bright sunshine, and running streams, and happy laughter. On the other, the manacled forms of listless prisoners, the dark cell, the moan of despair, the vision of death. Or, outside, are wild, sobbing, wintry winds, driving showers of hail and sleet, homeless wanderers, friendless outcasts ; inside, bright light, abundant food, a warm hearth, and a cheerful circle of friends. Between such opposite scenes as these there is only a door.

The real question in all such cases is,

"Can I open that door? Can I pass through it?" If not, all the waters of the sea, all the mountains of the world, could not form a stronger barrier.

There are many sorts of doors in different places, set up with various objects. And perhaps there are more stories, legendary and historical, more human hopes and despairs, connected with doors than with any other definite object of human make. But I must not linger round a tempting subject, a very suggestive thought. One door concerns us this evening.

There is a door between heaven and earth. Only a door! What would not we give to be able to open it and look inside, if but for a single instant? Well, that is impossible. But the door, we know, has been opened, and S. John, for one, was permitted to look, and to tell us what he saw within it. I can only repeat his description in his own words.

We must all settle for ourselves (I suppose) what it means. Some will tell you that it does not mean what it says, that the description is merely figurative, spiritual, metaphorical, prophetic, and so forth ; that is, that it means something else ; that is, that it has no definite meaning for us.

On this I would only say, that if it does not mean what it says, I do not see how any man can tell us what it does mean. Let us, to-night at any rate, take it just as it is, and let us listen, as so many children would listen, to the great evangelist's own account of what he saw when

“ A door was opened in heaven.”

He saw, he says, GOD's throne set up in heaven with a rainbow round it like an emerald. Before it was a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In front hung seven lamps of fire, and from it came forth lightnings and thunder and voices.

Round about the throne were four-and-twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment and wearing golden crowns. In the midst were four winged creatures, full of eyes within, who ceased not day nor night from chanting the great Trinity anthem, "Holy, Holy, Holy, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, which was, and is, and is to come." And then the elders took up the strain and answered in endless song, "Thou art worthy, LORD, to receive glory, and honour, and power : for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."

Then the subject of the heavenly worship changed suddenly, for in the midst of the throne stood a Lamb as it had been slain. And the four-and-twenty elders, and the four winged creatures, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours, praised the LORD, and said, "For Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy

blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

Then followed a mighty chorus, divided into two portions: first, a countless host of angels was heard singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." And then, "Every creature in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and in the sea," answered, "Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever"; and finally, in apparent conclusion of the really never-ending service, the four winged creatures cried, "Amen," and the four-and-twenty elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever.

Such, in brief, is what S. John heard and saw of the scenery and the occupation of the blessed, when

"A door was opened in heaven."

Now, my brethren, what do you think of all this ? It is a radiant, a dazzling, and altogether a wonderful vision, is it not ? Yes, it is certainly that. We almost feel that even the inspired words of the Evangelist do not convey the whole of its splendour and glory. Then is it so wonderful as to appear strange, unusual, altogether unlike anything to which we have been accustomed, either in thought or in reality ? I hope not. For if so, we cannot have been preparing ourselves to pass through that open door into heaven—as I suppose we are all trusting to do some day.

Just think about this. Recall for an instant one of those earthly scenes which I began by describing. Such a scene as you may see on any winter's night in any large city. Outside, in the streets, cold, and wet, and darkness. A door opens. Inside, a bright room, a table spread with fruit and flowers, a warm hearth, and

every preparation for a pleasant and social evening.

Tell me, now, would a houseless vagrant in his rags and his uncleanness be at his ease were he invited and pressed to enter in at that open door, and make one of that happy party? No. He would be wretched, altogether out of his element. He would ask for a gift of broken scraps, to be taken back to his congenial dirt in his own impure haunts.

The man who enters that house, and partakes of that feast with pleasure, is the man who has been accustomed to such scenes in his own daily life; whose manners, and clothes, and ways of thought, fit him to associate with the other invited guests. It is the old story of having to go to heaven with a wedding garment, of having one's present life moulded on heavenly lines if heaven is to be one's home.

It is not, you see, that the unbelieving,

irreligious man cannot go to heaven. Of course he could if God chose to send him there. But the point I urge is that he would be utterly miserable if he did go there just as he is. He would see nothing like himself in heaven. All his thoughts would be so entirely foreign that heaven would be a wretched place to him. He would say, "Let me out. Let me go back again. I cannot bear all this light and music. I cannot endure all these hymns and praises. This everlasting service of God tires me out. When I was on earth I never went to church oftener than once a week, and I did not enjoy that. It is all church here in heaven. This is no place for me. Let me go."

Ah! brethren, where could that man go to? There are only two final places possible for us all:—one is heaven, the other is hell.

Now, let us try to see what there is on earth which is a real preparation for

the eternal life in heaven, for that life of which S. John has given us just one passing glimpse, when the door opened for him just for a few too-short minutes.

I think you will see that there are two principal points in his description. One, that the occupation of the blessed in heaven is a continual service of praise and worship. The other, that those who are there love this better than any other occupation, because they love GOD above all things.

Take the last point first, since it really comes first in a man's experience. For no one could care about worshipping GOD if he did not care about GOD. That, then, is the first point really. Do you love GOD? It is not a matter of words, or a matter of fashion, or fancy. It is simply a matter of fact. Do you love GOD?

There is a story told of a brother of some religious order, whose name I have

forgotten, and who was asked how he managed to free himself from all feelings of annoyance and vexation in the daily trials of a very monotonous life. It was said to him, "You have the management of this brotherhood, and of all the charities connected with it. Socially and intellectually, you are far above the society you live in. Everything you see and do must jar with the results of your past training and your own personal existence. You are never out of temper. You always seem to be happy and contented. How do you manage it? What is your secret?"

"Well," he said, "it is no merit of mine. For years past, wherever I may be, I always have seen before my eyes one sight—the body of the LORD JESUS stretched on the Cross, dying, patiently, for my brethren and for me. It is always before me. How can I be anything but patient and grateful?"

Yes, brethren, in such a case—God being realised—it is plain that everything must be easy. So if you read all history you will come to the same conclusion. Apostles, Martyrs, Saints, holy men, religious men of all generations and countries, have realised God in one way or another. They felt that He was a Father to them—good, kind, and helpful; or a Saviour, the one Friend who lifted them out of all danger; or a Comforter, one who strengthened them in all trial. God was their one Resource. They went to Him in prayer and sacrament for all they wanted. And they always got all they wanted from Him. So they loved God more than anyone else or anything else in the world. That being so, all the rest was a matter of course.

I need not talk about their holy lives. In such a case a holy life is a matter of course. If you love God, if you see Him

in every act and fact of daily existence ; if you go to Him in all wants and troubles, you must be leading a holy life. I don't say a blameless, a sinless life ; but a life which is trying to be like the life of JESUS CHRIST, and which by GOD's sacramental grace is gradually becoming a better life. Every day a step is gained. That step is one step nearer to a door. That door is the door between us and heaven.

Now, let us come to the next point—that the life of the blessed in heaven is a life of perpetual worship. One great service goes on there for ever. There is no temple, because the whole infinite space is the place of worship ; so that it would be truer to say that heaven is all temple rather than to say that there is no temple there. For the choir there is the countless host of the blessed angels, and all the happy saints of JESUS, white-robed and wearing crowns of gold. For

the Altar there is the Throne of GOD. For the Priest and the Sacrifice there is the LORD JESUS CHRIST, who is a Priest for ever ; and He, too, is the Lamb who was slain, the Sacrifice which saves all the saved in time and eternity. For the Presence there is the unveiled Presence of the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, who was, and is, and is to come—the Eternal, the Illimitable.

My brethren, cannot we learn to love such a service as this ? Cannot we try to practise it ? Cannot we determine to imitate it ?

Take that heavenly worship as a pattern for our earthly services.

Let this, or any house of GOD, be as beautiful as art and money can make it. Let it be bright with colour and shining with gold. High in the midst set up a great Altar-throne for the Sacramental Presence of CHRIST. Let the Altar Cross remind you of the suffering and glory of

JESUS ; the two Altar lights speak of His twofold nature, human and divine. In front, let the white-robed choir sing joyful hymns, and responsive psalms, and canticles of praise and adoration. Festival by festival let high Eucharistic service be celebrated with solemn gladness and joyful worship. Day by day let the *Matin* chant rise up, and the quiet Evensong ascend from earth to the listening ear of God.

Do not heed the worldly, the careless, the profane, if they scorn your efforts, or scoff at your worship, or tell you that this place is not like heaven. Of course it is not like heaven. But it is a copy for all that, and copied out of the Bible, too. It is a poor copy, perhaps. But it is a good copy, if it is the best you can make.

And our service is a rehearsal of the endless service of saints and angels. We try to have the same kind of life, and

occupation, and scenery here as there is in heaven. And why do we do that? Because heaven will not be strange to those who have tried to copy it here. Its sights and sounds will be familiar to those who have striven to imitate it here.

I wonder if you all know the story of the bells of Limerick Cathedral? An Italian made a peal of bells for his native town. So full and mellow was their tone that he left his place of work and took up his abode close by them. After a while war came. The Italian was taken into exile. The bells were captured, and were also taken away. Years passed on. One day the exile was being rowed in a boat up the river Shannon towards the city of Limerick. As he neared the wharf, the cathedral bells began to chime softly across the water. He recognised their voices in an instant. They were his own bells—his own long-loved, long-lost children. He folded his arms, and

lay back in the boat with his face towards the tower. The rowers dropped their oars, and lifted him up. But he never moved again. He was dead. There is a joy too great for human endurance. It was a happy end to his exile. He had gone home with that familiar sound ringing in his ears once more.


My brethren, don't you think that if ever you pass through the open door of heaven, your first, your chief delight will be to hear the dear old church music of the past sung by the white-robed choirs of crowned angels, who chant the eternal praise of God ? Yes ; you will know it all again. Our own Eucharistic hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy, LORD GOD of Hosts," will never cease in heaven. It will be all so familiar to us—the anthems of praise, the service of song, the Throne, and the Presence of the LORD.

Heaven must be a happy place. It will be home, because it will be the eternal house of God.



II.—HOME.

II COR. V. 6—"At Home."

 HERE is one word in the English language which is more thoroughly English than any other word in the language.

It is the word Home. It has a genuine ring in it which goes straight to all hearts. It means something very definite. It is what we all want. It is what we all value.

Home. Go out into the midwinter, midnight streets of this or any large city. The rain is falling drearily. A cold, driving, northern wind is sweeping strongly through deserted alleys and bye-ways, and swirling round every angle and corner of sodden lanes and dark courts. Ask some poor, cowering, half-clad, starving wanderer—for there

are such, even in the 19th century ; ask him or her—for women are outcasts, even in the 19th century ; ask her why she is not at home in this bleak and pinching weather. “Home!” it will be answered bitterly, “Home! I have no home. There is no home for the like of me.”

Why, my brethren, why? Well, we are coming to that directly.

All wanderers, you know, are not homeless. The sailor, tossing on the stormy sea, sport of all waves that roll and winds that blow, has his snug berth, his warm fire, his mates, his work, and his rest. The soldier on the march has his camp-fire, his tent or shelter, his comrades, his pleasures, his work, and his rest. Yes, in both cases, rest, because there has been work.

And notice further. The instant there is in any life the beginning of work, the attempt to perform duty, there is the elementary form of a home. When

a young man begins to work in any independent fashion, he begins with a home. It must be on a small scale at first—just a lodging ; a single room, perhaps, with scanty comforts and no luxuries, but still the beginning of home, a place of shelter from winter and rough weather, a refuge where one may think, and pray if you like, a place of recreation where one may gain strength for more work. Scarcely a perfect home, because it is so lonely, because it is so silent ; there is no family to foster mutual affection, no circle of friends to gather round the evening fire for needful amusement and helpful conversation. But later on in life, when more work has been done, and consequently more wealth earned ; or when inherited wealth, which is simply the condensed work of many generations, has been acquired, then the home grows into perfection. Then the master becomes the centre of a society, which is

his family, because he is the source of its order, safety, and sustenance.

And further. Notice that a place is home only when these points exist ; and is a more or less perfect home as they are increased or diminished.

“ Be it ever so homely, there is no place like home.”

Yes, the size does not make the difference, neither does the income expended on it.

What you want at home, to make a home, is, first, to feel that the place is your own, for a time at all events, and that within it you will find all the common necessities of life. Then, secondly, to have in it order, and therefore peace ; one master ; one rule ; one object, which is, if you think it out, to obey God and help one another. And, thirdly, companionship of a more intimate kind than is to be had elsewhere ; and, of course,

in the best homes of a better sort than is to be had elsewhere.

These are the three points of the Home Charter—Trustworthiness, Order, Companionship. You may find them in any real home. It has well been said that “If GOD be there, a cottage will hold as much happiness as might stock a palace.” It was of real homes of every grade and every size that our English poet was thinking when she embodied many of our natural feelings and beliefs on this subject in these lines :—

“The stately homes of England,
How beautiful they stand,
Amidst their tall ancestral trees,
O'er all the pleasant land !

* * * * *

The merry homes of England !
Around their hearths by night
What gladsome looks of household love
Meet in the ruddy light !

* * * * *

The free, fair homes of England !
Long, long, in hut and hall,

May hearts of native proof be reared
To guard each hallowed wall.
And green for ever be the groves,
And bright the flowery sod,
Where first the child's glad spirit loves
Its country and its God." *

Now, in the text—for we are not yet quite emancipated from that sometimes unnecessary necessity—in the passage from which the text is taken, the gist of the argument is that there are two classes of homes in all lives: one on earth, the other in heaven. The whole passage is a little obscure in our translation, and some of the leading thoughts of the original are entirely omitted, but the central notion is plain enough. Here, in this world, whether we speak of the envelope of the soul and call it the human body, or whether we speak of the envelope of the soul and body and call it a home—that in which we live is a tempo-

* Mrs. Hemans.

rary abode. S. Paul calls it a tent. That is a metaphor for anything which stands long enough to answer its destined purpose and is then removed. Troubles, for instance, are likened to tent-dwellers :

—"the cares which infest the day
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away." *

So our earthly homes are transitory, passing away in every sense,—whether we think of them as perishing by decay, as being destroyed, such as remain, when the earth itself shrivels up like a scroll ; or whether we think of ourselves as travellers, sheltering for a time in such refuge as we can find, till the word "March" is given, and we move on to our final destination.

Well, such is our earthly home, says the Apostle—perishable. But our heavenly home is not so ; it is eternal. That is the great difference between

* Longfellow.

them. And there is not any other essential difference.

You see now why I began with trying to get down to the bottom of the meaning of the word Home? It is of very much more importance to do so than many would imagine possible.

Just observe the steps of thought in the process.

First of all, you endeavour to find out what it is which makes any place on earth a really good home. That is precisely what we have been doing, and three chief points came out at once—that we must be able to rely upon the place for shelter, food, and rest; that there must be order in it—that is, religion and morality, or obedience to all known laws; that it shall hold within it those for whom we care most and who care most for us.

Now, of course, every one sees that such a place as this would be a very

happy home. And you also see why? Because everything which goes on there is in conformity with God's will. There is at any rate a perpetual attempt to do what God wants done. There may be failures. There must be. But that is because it is a home on earth.

We shall come to the home in heaven directly. I want to stop for an instant, and talk about this earthly home a little more.

We should all try to make happy homes for ourselves on earth. Never mind that you are told that such places are transitory. And do not listen when you are told that this earth is not a place for happiness and comfort. Try and make for yourselves comfortable homes, happy homes. They may last for fifty years, they may last for fifty days. That does not the least matter. Always try to make everything as good and as perfect as you can. The greatest statesmen

have been those who have possessed an enormous, an infinite capacity for taking trouble. GOD spends as much care, and lavishes as much beauty on the wing of a butterfly, which lives a week, as He does on the plumage of a raven, which has been said to live a hundred years. That which is worth doing at all is worth doing as well as possible. Make a good home for yourself, and you will have done the best thing you can do for yourself, your neighbourhood, and the world at large.

We have seen how to make happy homes. GOD is the central thought of a happy home. There must be trust and reliance in it because GOD is to be trusted ; average comfort and necessary sustenance must be there, because GOD is a food-giver and a source of strength ; order must be in it, because He is a ruler and law-giver ; peace, because He sends peace. And there must be the society of

those we love, because GOD is love, and is always surrounded with those who love Him.

It was to such a home as this that JESUS came, at Bethany once on a time, and drove away a passing cloud of trouble from it. It was to such a home as this that S. John, the beloved disciple, brought the blessed Virgin Mary when JESUS was taken away from her. It was to homes like this that S. Luke, the beloved physician, ministered in a two-fold capacity, knowing very well, as a saintly physician would know, that the health of the soul is involved in the health of the body. Order means physical as well as spiritual order. Disease is disorder. "Dirt is matter in the wrong place" *—that is, matter out of order. Physical neglect results in sin as well as spiritual neglect. And as last week's collect teaches us, we must be

* *Lord Palmerston. Speech at Edinburgh.*

“ready,” prepared, clean, and healthy, “both in body and soul,” if we would “accomplish those things which God would have done.” *

Now, brethren, when these earthly homes which we have made for ourselves are over and done with, there is only another sort of home possible, and that is in heaven. Please do not tell me that the change will necessarily be a great and a radical one. I do not believe it, and I never could believe it. And I will tell you why.

First, because the happy home which we have constructed on earth, out of God’s word, is so essentially a part of God’s will and ordering, that it is impossible to believe that it can ever cease to exist. It is an organic portion of the kingdom of God, which is a state of being common both to earth and heaven. It is of the essence of God, and, therefore, must be essentially eternal.

* *Collect for the 20th Sunday after Trinity.*

And then, again, we know that our souls go to heaven (if we go there at all)—the same souls, the same you and I who are now looking at one another. And our bodies? Well, we are told * that, as a seed is to a plant, so is this body to the body that shall be—"That shall be"—that shall be in heaven—that shall live and flourish there. Does not that fact involve similar conditions of being in either place? If you pour boiling water on a seed, you kill it; would you argue that therefore you might pour boiling water on the full-grown plant with safety to it? And yet that is the logical sequence of all arguments which go to prove that heaven is an utterly different place from earth.

No, it has yet to be proved that the difference between earth and heaven is one of kind, not of degree. Nothing

* I. Cor. xv. 35 to end. Job. xix. 26—"In my flesh I shall see God."

but a new revelation will prove that, since all old revelation asserts the contrary. All that we have which is good here, all we do which is good here, will be found there. The only difference will be that all which is good here will be better there, will be made perfect.

Scriptural detail is scanty, but that which is given all points to the same end. Take Worship. I will again ask you to read and accept the revelation given to S. John the Divine by the Holy Ghost.* There are those who believe the Apocalypse to be an elaborate parable, a fairy story or fable, with details as unreal as those of Æsop or Andersen, and with a moral which depended on the *ipse dixit* of an ex-evangelist. But the Church which included that book in the canon has from the earliest ages † treated it as containing unfulfilled prophecy. We

* Rev. iv. 1, et seq. ; Rev. vii. 9, et seq.

† S. Irenæus Adv. Hæc. v. 30.

cannot, now, improve upon her existing creed, or creeds. Some day the people of England will credit the Catholic school of this country with its chief claim to credit—namely, that it preaches GOD’S Word as it is written, and not as it might have been intended to have been written. We say, “This is heaven,” because GOD’S Word says so ; just as we say, “This is CHRIST’S body,” because CHRIST says so. Other schools teach otherwise. We do not complain of that. We only ask for leave and room ; at any rate, to say that which GOD says.

So with Worship. That which has been asserted by the Scriptures to belong to our worship here—spiritually, faith, love, adoration—and, corporeally, the outcome of highest art—that is, GOD’S Spirit incorporate in His formal creation—has been also declared to be the essence and adjuncts of the glorified worship of GOD *in heaven*. Indeed, since there is a

resurrection body, it is scarcely less than necessary that there should be bodily adjuncts thereto. And if the body of the future is but the body of the present perfected, it is but reasonable that its surroundings should be those of this world perfected. A high ritualistic service, then, is not essentially different from the Temple service,* of which GOD ordered every detail,† at which CHRIST Himself worshipped; which His followers adopted, or adapted, as soon as they were able to surround His shrines with all the wealth and care of earth. And it is identically the same with the service which the Holy Scriptures say is to be the worship of the future. There‡ is no difference of kind. There is a difference of degree. As it becomes possible to make it more elaborate—more

* Exodus xxxv. 4, et seq. ; xxxvi., xxxvii., xxxviii., xxxix. ; I. Kings v., vi., vii.

† S. Luke xix. 45—48. Acts xi. 46.

‡ *Freeman's Principles of Divine Service* *passim*.

perfect, so by God's will is this effected both on earth and * in heaven.

Take another point — Beneficence. CHRIST's earthly life was spent in doing good. His servants are taught by Him to work for GOD and man. An idle, useless man is no Christian. Then, in heaven, you see, the same rule obtains. The angels are † ministering spirits sent forth for good. They ‡ watch over us, we know, and of their other work we know that it is as || unceasing as it is effectual. Then when Saints become § as angels, shall they cease to do good because they are as angels? Such an assertion is nearly impossible. If, then, an identity of condition in this respect is probable, it goes some way in proving identical conditions in other respects.

* Rev. xxi. 22 ; xxii. 5.

† Heb. i. 14.

‡ S. Matthew xviii. 10.

§ S.S. *passim*. II. S. Peter ii. 11.

|| S. Matthew xxii. 30.

Take another point—the recognition of the blessed by the blessed in heaven. It is often asked, “Shall we know one another in heaven?” Certainly not, if heaven is another condition of being, a different kind of life. But the question has been answered once for all in these terse words, “Do you think we shall have less intelligence there than we have here?”

Take one more point—Knowledge. S. Paul writes, “We now know in part; then we shall know as we are known.” This cannot be parable. It is prophecy. It is on a par with all that is told us by the Holy Scriptures of this and the next world. It is the history of development. That which is, if it be good, will not cease to be, but will become better.

The whole theory may be summed up in a few words. The Church on earth is God’s kingdom on earth; the Church in heaven is God’s kingdom in heaven.

Differing in degree, the same in kind.
The same thing developed ; from seed to
fruit, from immaturity to perfection.

One word more. My brethren, do you
desire heaven ? Then begin it here, for
so only shall you have it hereafter.
Make every heart a home of prayer.
Make every home a home of GOD—a
place of order, purity, and love. Then
you will not fear death. It will be no
organic change, no transformation. It
will be a passage through Paradise to
the final development of heaven.

There is the ceaseless worship of the
saints, the music of angels, the light and
fragrance and beauty of the eternal
world, the unveiled presence of God.
There is perfect service, perfect goodness,
perfect knowledge, perfect companion-
ship, perfect love.

There is the perfect Home. Yes,

“ —* when beneath the Church's shade,
The lifeless body hath been laid,


* Dr. J. B. Monsell.

With such sweet sounds of prayer and
praise
As men round Christian death-bed raise,
Let no one think of him with pain ;
' To live is CHRIST, to die is gain.'
He wants not pity, nor is poor,
Nor dead, whose life and joy are sure.
Say, rather, ' Thank GOD, he at last
Is safe, all sin and sorrow past.'
' Gone Home.' That is the only word
That should from Christian lips be heard.
No more with weary steps to roam
Earth's wilderness. Gone Home. Gone
Home."



III.—WORSHIP.

REV. IV. 1—"Come up hither."

 AN army of observation is posted on the heights overlooking the country through which it is about to pass.

The white tents glisten in the early morning sun, and from countless points along the whole line bugle-calls ring out clearly and continually, each silvery echo resounding from hill to hill, and dying away fitfully in the wide landscape outspread below.

To the unskilled ear it is so much martial music and no more, but to the initiated it is very different. Each sonorous cadence is a distinct sentence, an order, a summons, a call to do something, *or to go in some direction.*

So it is with us—us soldiers of the army of the LORD.

The trumpet-notes of the Church ring out with no uncertain or capricious sound.

Everyone of the great Festivals, for example, has a definite bugle-call of its own—a clear, short, decisive order—to which we must listen, which we must obey.

To-day, on the high and mystical Feast of Trinity Sunday, the summons cannot be put in better words than those from the Epistle of which I have just reminded you—

“Come up hither.”

That is to-day's bugle-call.

It rings in every ear to-day.

What does it mean? What does it bid us do?

It is a call to come away—to rise up, in heart and mind, from the cares and the loves of earth into the far distant,

far serener, far lovelier, scenes of heaven.

It is a call to tear ourselves from the worldly ties and affections which have bound themselves round the fibres of our inmost being, and to soar slowly higher and higher into those calm regions where God alone dwells, and reigns, and is.

It is a call to prostrate our whole selves before the great white Throne, and there to worship Him and Him only.

“Come up hither.”

It was the call given to S. John the Divine before his life's work was over. He was looking—(notice that, he was looking, looking up)—and he saw a door opened in heaven, and then he heard one of the bugle-calls of the Church of the living God.

He heard the voice of a trumpet, talking with him, speaking to him, and its notes said quite plainly—

“Come up hither.”

And he went. And then he saw that grand and glorious vision of heaven which is recorded in to-day's Epistle : a throne set on the verge of a crystal sea, with a rainbow glistening like an emerald above it.

Thunder and lightning play underneath. Seven lamps of fire burn before it.

And throned thereon was the great God. And he heard the songs of the four blessed ones, who stood up in the midst of the dazzling light, and sang the eternal Trinity Anthem, "Holy, Holy, Holy, LORD GOD ALMIGHTY, which was, and is, and is to come."

Do you not think that when the Evangelist descended in spirit from that ineffable splendour, he was a changed man? Had he not "come" in truth, "trailing clouds of glory from GOD, who is our home"? Must not his garments have been scented with myrrh, aloes, and

cassia, impregnated and saturated with the Divine aroma of the dwelling of the illimitable Deity ? After what he had experienced, could the world to which he had returned ever be just as it had been to him ?

Must he not feel it to be no abiding place for him now ? There was a better world. And he had seen it.

That made all the difference. How he must have longed to go back to the place and the loveliness which he had left up there !

“Come up hither.” Surely, that bugle-call rang in his ears day and night ever afterwards.

Surely, there was many a silent hour afterwards, in the dark watches before the dawn, when he used to kneel down, and with uplifted hands and upraised eyes seek to penetrate in thought that dense canopy which parted him from his own home ; when he used to meditate in

speechless rapture on the glory which was always there ; when he used to long for the coming of that coming day on which life should be merged in light, and this world be melted into the fiery stream of the downpouring, overmastering glory of the reigning God.

And now of ourselves. “ Come up hither.” Listen to the bugle-call of the Church Catholic to-day.

Seek we to rise in happy meditation unto that “city never built with hands, nor hoary with the years of time ; a city without griefs or graves, without sins or sorrows, without births or burials, without marriages or mournings ; a city which glories in having JESUS for its King ; whose walls are sure salvation ; whose pearly gates are praise.”*

As one of our earliest Church poets† has sung :—

*Dr. Guthrie.

† Quarles.

“Her streets with burnished gold are paved
round,
Stars lie like pebbles scattered on the
ground ;
There shines no sun by day, no moon by
night—
The palace glory is the palace light ;
There is no time to measure motion by,
For time is swallowed in eternity.
There, face to face, the ravished eye shall see
Great GOD—that glorious One in Three
And Three in One ; and seeing Him shall
bless Him,
And blessing, love Him, and in love possess
Him.”

So “Come,” sang the angels, “come
up hither.”

Ah ! we answer often in the bitterness
of our hearts—

“Fain would I rise, but that I fear to fall.”
Fain would I rise to those serener heights,
but they are too high for me. Hard, and
black, and barren as my life is here, cold
and unsatisfying as earth below is, yet
this heaven-born ecstasy of the saintly
spirit is far beyond my powers.

I would rise thither, but I cannot attain unto it.

Do you remember what good Bishop Taylor says for such as you, my brother? He says :—"So have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven, and climb above the clouds. But the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion was irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest than it could recover by the vibration of its wings, till the little creature was forced to stay and pant, and wait till the storm was over. And then it made a prosperous flight, and rose and sang as if it had learnt music and motion from an angel as he passed sometime through the air about his ministrations here below."

Yes, there is the secret.

When the tempest of trial is too vio-

lent, or the temptations of earth too mighty for us, and we cannot rise to the heights at which we aim, it is the hour of the spirits of darkness. Then wait for the hour of GOD ; wait till the storm is over. Kneel down, and look up, and pray. In the LORD'S own time, He will send His angel to thee, and thou shalt learn music and motion, the music of the skies, and the flight of the happy spirit which is liberated from the weights of time, and rises silently into the presence of its God.

“ Come up hither.”

To-day, of all days in the year, we need to hear and follow this trumpet-call.

For now the fair sequence of Fast and Festival is over, and we enter upon the long, level road of the Trinity season, which stretches its interminable length across the plain of time until it is lost in the dark Advent forests which lead to

Bethlehem, the birthplace of the CHRIST to be.

That journey is before us. It is a dangerous one ; because it is so level and easy, and so unaided by places of rest and refreshment.

There is no season of the year when the attractions of the world are so tempting ; no time when we so fall away from grace given as we do in the time on which we are now entering. And so, for a brief moment, let us heed the angels' call, and rise in thought and prayer to the very Throne of GOD, asking Him to guide us, and guard us, and keep us in the narrow way, and bring us safely to its end—to the peace of another Christmas and the brightness of another Easter Feast.

And again. At no time do we so much need to listen to the bugle-call of "Come up hither" as we do to-day, on the high Festival of Trinity Sunday.

For how else, save by the light of heaven, can we see the Mystery which the Church this day sets before us? Is it not so vast, so deep, so awful, in its nature, as to be utterly beyond our earthly powers of comprehension?

On earth, standing here in the dim half-lights of time, how can we fathom the being of the Eternal One? how realise Him who hath neither beginning nor ending; how grasp the infinite?

For what does the Church teach us of God to-day?

That He "is one GOD, one LORD, not one only Person, but three Persons in one Substance. For that which we believe of the glory of the Father, the same we believe of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, without any difference or inequality. So the Father is GOD, the Son is GOD, and the Holy Ghost is GOD; and yet they are not three GODS, but one GOD."

By no exercise of reason, by no effort of mind, can we explain these statements of the Word of GOD respecting His own Being and Nature.

We can but say, "It is like God, because it is incomprehensible."

We can but kneel down and cry, "LORD, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

Ah, brethren, that prayer is never truly uttered save in the spirit-world. Never, fettered by the grip of earth, can the mind of man cast itself without hesitation and reserve into the mind of God. No man trusting in man can believe God, can know God.

The utter abandonment of all the lessons which the world teaches, and teaches so well, can only be gained elsewhere.

We must hear the angels' call—"Come up hither"; we must rise in the spirit with S. John the Divine into

the world of spirits, and there cast all we have—all our reason, and our strength, and our knowledge, and our powers—before the White Throne, and then, when we are stripped of all, when we are quite empty, and quite helpless, and quite alone with God, then only can we say—

“LORD, I believe. I believe that which Thou hast taught me of Thyself.

Thou art God, and I am Thine.

I know nothing ; but I believe all.”

Lastly. When we have cast our worldly crowns of wisdom, in utter abnegation of self, before the Throne of the Highest, then we may descend from these spiritual heights and practically realise the value of this greatest of all Mysteries.

As * one of our old Divines has said,
“The good man who feels the power of

* Bishop Taylor.

the Father, and he to whom the Son is become wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, he in whose heart the love of the Spirit of God is spread, to whom God hath communicated the Holy Ghost the Comforter, this man, though he understands nothing of that which is unintelligible, yet he only understands the mysteriousness of the Holy Trinity. No man can be convinced well and wisely of the article of the blessed and undivided Trinity, but he that feels the righteousness of the Father begetting him to a new life, the wisdom of the Son building him up in a most holy faith, and the love of the Spirit of God making him to become like unto God."

Yes. This Mystery is the most practical as it is the most mysterious of all mysteries. In the words of* another of our departed Preachers of the Faith :—

* Dr. H. B. Evans.

“ This Mystery teaches us that this mysterious GOD is our Father—that like as a father pitieth his own children so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him ; that to show His pity as a father He sent His Son into the world to reveal Himself as our Brother, and that He now sendeth His Spirit to testify of both this Brotherhood and this Fatherhood—to guard, guide, counsel, and console, and at length to conduct us to our Home in the bosom of that Father, in the fellowship of that Brother—whither a multitude which no man can number of His brethren and ours have gone before.”

Our Home. “ Come up hither,” cry the trumpet calls of the angels from their airy heights,—come up in the spirit now—now, whilst there is an open door between us and that bright world—rise on the wings of faith and prayer, and

learn of GOD what He is, and what thou art.

And then go down for a while again into the world of trial and sin and pain, and do His will—fight against temptation, do battle with the one sin which is ever stirring to bar your way back to that fair place where you have known God, and have learnt to trust in Him for all knowledge and all hope.

And so by slow and sure degrees work your way upwards Home again.

Our Home is in heaven, and so our conversation, our daily life, must be in heaven. This life must be a copy of that life. The pattern is in our hand. It is given to us when we ascend in the spirit to the world of spirits and by faith see GOD as He is, and learn of Him the will of the Father, the love of the Son, and the graces of the Holy Ghost.

And so for the brief time which remains to us, see that we travel home-

wards by the light of heaven, and by the favour of Him who awaits us there.

This world is no place for us. Fair as it is, it is but the vestibule of those bright courts where the true Sun shines and where GOD reigns with all His hosts for ever and ever.

Lift up your hearts, for your Home is not here. Your Home is with GOD, and GOD is in heaven, and to-day the trumpets of the angels blare incessant through the universe, and their voices make one grand unison of love, as with strong and persistent tones they ring out the gracious irresistible call of GOD to every living creature whom He hath made.

“Come,” they cry, “come,”

“Come away,”

“Come up hither.”



IV.—SELF OR GOD?

II. TIMOTHY II. 19:

“The Lord knoweth them that are His.”



HAVE you ever wondered at the quantity of good and beautiful things in the world which seem to be utterly unnoticed, utterly forgotten, and at last utterly lost?

I am not speaking of the world of which man has the ordering and directing—as a rule, we make the most of our possessions. If you are the fortunate owner of something which you think is beautiful, or rare, or valuable, you do not as a rule lock it up, or hide it, or thrust it away in a dark place. If it is a picture, for example, you put it in a good light on your walls; if it is a flower in exquisite perfection of growth, you

are not happy till it has been admired by other enthusiastic florists ; if it is a scarce specimen of the jeweller's art, you will send it to some exhibition where it will find the appreciation which it deserves, and which you desire it should obtain.

But this is not GOD's way in His world; this is not the way in which GOD deals with His treasures. He seems to us to take but small account of the bulk of the good and beautiful things which He makes.

Go out into the woods in the early summer time, when the life of the year is at the full, and see what a wealth, what a prodigality of loveliness you will find everywhere. In the most hidden of recesses, where no human foot ever penetrates, there are flowers and foliage in countless profusion, every bloom, every curve of which is a miracle of perfection. No man sees them, no man admires them.

They are as unregarded as the filmy-winged ephemerid, which is poised above each chalice for an instant, and is gone to come no more.

What a marvellous waste of beauty it all is! You must think so. And you must remember that it is a waste which has been ceaseless and unchecked from the days of Eden to these very summer days of ours.

Well, you may notice just the same with mankind.

Our world's notabilities are carefully set up on pedestals, and their memory is preserved in honour. The great men of one century are handed on to the next as a precious legacy, and are seldom, if ever, thrust utterly aside and forgotten. It is true that they are a motley crew, some good, some bad, some purely common-place; they are, however, all alike in one respect, in being successful—they have done something, or made some-

thing, or have been useful in some way to some body, or some party, or section of society. And the world finds a pleasure (or a use) in not forgetting them—admires them like pictures, or exhibits them like works of art—and is on the whole generous in its verdict, if not always just in its award of praise.

But GOD's way of dealing with men's characters seems to be different, quite different.

He "knows them that are His." He knows (what we never know) how much good there is in men. He knows all the white souls, all the pure spirits, the saintly aims, the noble lives, the heavenly dispositions, which are to be found in all kinds of places, in every age of the world. He notices, and loves, and regards them all.

But what does He do with them ?

Just what He does with the beautiful flowers which He makes and cares for

every spring and summer time in every year. What He does with the wild flowers He does with the white souls. He makes them, and looks at them, and loves them, and does not forget them. That seems to be all, for the present at all events.

Is it not enough? Is it not enough for the star-like flower? Is it not enough for the star-crowned saint?

Surely it is more than enough. And yet we do not always think so. We complain that God does not make enough of these fair things of His. That they are kept in hiding and seclusion, are neglected, forgotten, and useless.

Ah, my brethren, we are often very unjust towards God.

Here is a case in point. You get, you see, a broad contrast. On the one side are the world's great men. On the other side are God's great men. Call them

heroes on one side, and saints on the other side if you like.

You say—"Now, what a startling difference there is in the fame and reputation of these two bodies."

The world's great men are on all tongues, and in all books—their memory is ever green. But the saintly souls are mostly unnoticed when they are here, and utterly forgotten when they are gone ; we say what a waste of holiness and of beauty of life there is in every generation !

And it does seem so at first, especially if you once realize that God's Saints are almost as common as God's flowers. There is no period, no country, no rank, in which they do not exist. You will find them in cottages as abundantly as in palaces ; they are to be seen among the poor and the unlettered as often as among the rich and educated. Age makes no manner of difference—the little

child and the white-haired old man enter the kingdom of God hand in hand, and one angel crowns them both.

And if this is so—if you realise the vast and increasing number of the chosen and accepted servants of God, you see at once how many myriads of God's saints are (as far as this world goes) utterly hidden and set aside, and apparently utterly wasted.

It seems, as we think of it, to be just like the waste which is going on in the summer woods at the present time. The perfect blossoms unfold themselves and put forth all their loveliness, and no man sees them, no man is the better for them; they come, and go, and are gone; and are, we think, just so many good things utterly wasted.

Now this is a very common thought, a very natural thought.

I wonder whether we all see—

I.—That it is a wrong thought.

And II.—That it has a great deal to do with the happiness of our lives, both inside and outside of this church ?

Well, I.—Of course it is unjust to God, on the face of it.

It is—it must be—impossible for God to waste one atom of the infinite creation which is His work. We may not be able to see the use of loss—the withering of unregarded vegetation, the carnage of the battle-field, the endless story of decay and death which rises up from every section of the living world of creation. We shrink instinctively from the recital, as a man moves uneasily in his sleep, half awakened by frightening thoughts which he only half comprehends. You remember the great poet's words :—

“ Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams ?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life ;

That I, considering everywhere
Her secret meaning in her deeds,
And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear ;

I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to GOD ;

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is LORD of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope."

Yes, all real believers in a wise and good GOD come to this—a confession of one's utter ignorance, and a prayer that He will give us "more light," and at last the crown of the saints, and a perfect knowledge of the perfect righteousness of His ways.

And so II.—It is plain that we are unjust to GOD because we measure His doings by a human instead of a Divine standard.

Why do you think that the wild flowers in the wood are wasted ? Because you do not see them, because you believe that no man gets any appreciable good out of them.

Why do you think that the religious, God-fearing lives of so many myriads of the servants of CHRIST are wasted ? Because their names and their memories have utterly faded away ; and there is nothing left of so many of them which is of any apparent use to you or to any-one else.

It is then from common, natural Selfishness that we think these very natural and very common thoughts.

Is it not so ?

Here is a test.

Forget yourself for an instant, and see how your thoughts change.

At once you see that the flowers ought to flourish, and bloom, and fruit, wherever they exist. What does it

matter, except to man, that man sees them not? Their duty, their object, the essence of their being, is simply to be as beautiful and perfect as GOD has willed them to be.

So with mankind. Every man is doing his truest work by simply living a religious, God-fearing life, regardless of all consequences. What does it matter, except to others, that others value his life? His duty is to do GOD's will; that is what GOD requires of him, and of all creation.

This is the philosophy of the 148th Psalm, "Praise the LORD of Heaven" sings the Psalmist, "Praise Him all His hosts, praise Him ye Angels of His. Praise the LORD upon earth, mountains, and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, beasts and all cattle, worms and feathered fowl, kings of the earth and all people, young men and maidens, old men and children, praise the Name of the LORD ;

for His Name only is excellent, and His praise above heaven and earth."

All created beings are fulfilling their lives if they live in obedience to the laws of GOD who made them. "He hath given them a law for ever and ever," says the Psalmist in the same Psalm, "a law which shall not be broken."

The highest religious life of which man is capable is the life of the wild flower in the woods—a life of mere obedience to the will of GOD. There is no self in that life. It is a life of devotion, of love, of trust, of Eucharist.

III.—Lastly, see that no thoughts can be more practical than these are. They give you a rule of life which is good everywhere—in this holy place, and outside of it.

"Forget yourself, and love GOD."

Is there a higher rule than this ?

No indeed, for you can only learn it from the lips of JESUS, and see it

practised in perfection by Him only.

It is the secret of all happiness. You want to find happiness often enough.

The world is cold and unsympathetic. Your surroundings are bleak and stormy. You have many trials.

You are not strong enough to cope with your temptations. You are lonely, weak, easily stirred, easily led away.

Or, in other cases, you make no progress, because your religion does not seem to touch you; the feelings of which others speak are never felt by you; religious language is a dead language to you; the words you use convey no notions, make no impressions, never seem to get at your heart.

So I might go on all night telling you true stories, giving you the real experiences of living souls, your own experiences, my own experiences—thrice-told tales—the chorus of sad, dispirited, overladen souls; a chorus ever rising up

in one great wail of sorrow and disappointment from the dark places of earth to the light of the throne and Presence of God.

My brethren, there is but one remedy for this, a simple remedy—

“Forget yourself and love God.”

Forget yourself just for one hour ; and look up, and go up. Look up to heaven and go up to God.

As some dweller in a crowded city, harassed with the continual cares of business, and wearied to death with the daily struggle for life, escapes for a moment into fresh scenes and surroundings, and climbing a solitary mountain height regains by mere contact with the bright sunshine and unsullied air of heaven, the strength and calm which he seemed to have lost for ever ; so is it with you.

Throw away the burden of self-consciousness, and self-aggrandisement,

and self-interest, and self-seeking, which is at the root of most human misery. Forget self, and cast your whole being into the mighty Being of God.

He is, He must be, all sufficing. Worship Him. Praise Him. Love Him. Trust Him. Live with Him.

You can do so. You know how. You are a Christian. You are a Churchman. You have a Church and an Altar, and you can always go to God.

Go to Him. Forget the turmoils and troubles of the world, and fix your hearts on that bright place where He reigns for ever in calm glory and changeless peace.

It is heaven, that place.

But you can in heart and mind thither ascend. Specially in this coming* season can you ascend with CHRIST, and gaze with the loving eyes of faith on the vision of your enthroned God.

Think, then, brethren, of the flowers

* Ascensiontide.

of the field, whose only work is to unfold their petals and bask in the sunshine of Him who made them.

Think of the countless saints whose only pleasure it is to do GOD's will, and to cast all their cares on Him, who knoweth and careth for all that are His. Think of GOD and forget yourself.

And then, be your troubles, and temptations, and trials what they may, then assuredly into your parched and thirsting hearts will fall the blessed rain of peace—a great peace—the peace of GOD which passeth all understanding ; the peace which this world never yet gave, and which this world cannot take away.



V.—VISIONS OF GOD.

EZEK. I. 1 :

"Visions of God."

MANY are the souls to whom religion is unsatisfying, because they are still waiting for a vision of God.

For what a common life is this! You have been passing through that great machine which we call the Church's system, from your earliest hours to the present time. Baptised in infancy, taught in budding childhood to pray night and morning at your mother's knee, then by degrees you were saturated with the facts of the Bible. For the Bible is the first and best story-book. There are no stories so entrancing to a child as those which a lover of children can weave out

of the earlier Scripture narratives. Next comes instruction in the simpler doctrines of Christianity. And then the habits of Church-going are more or less formed. And so arrives the time of Confirmation, which seems to focus all the teaching of the past, and to point you to a bright and happy future.

Then, by the blessing of God, you assent, both in heart and mind, to your new position, and dutifully and diligently endeavour to carry out the rules of your religion with patience and perseverance.

Your personal prayers are said carefully and conscientiously. You are as regular in your attendance at Church as the circumstances of your life permit. You are a communicant, and perhaps a constant one. Yes ; I am thinking of many who are seeking God with all their might, and who have learnt that He is to be found at the Altar, and who *come there* with the utmost devotion and

persistence, and who, of course, find Him there because they come.

But, still, if some of these should ever be led to speak of their inner lives, they will often acknowledge to a deep feeling of disappointment—sometimes of very bitter disappointment. They never thought, when they began a personally religious life—say, directly after Confirmation—that religion would be what it is to them.

They thought they were going to be like the Israelites, who, after long wanderings in waste and desert wildernesses, suddenly crossed a river, and were knee-deep in flowers, were at rest in the promised land of sunshine, and plenty, and peace.

Ah! yes. You thought that your religious life was to be like that. There was every reason to suppose that the instant you got your promotion, attained the highest rank in the army of CHRIST,

that then there would be nothing left to desire.

And, in so many cases, the result of the change is—disappointment.

That is to say, there is no sunshine, no flowers, no music, no pomp, and glitter of victory.

I am supposing there is everything else. I am supposing that because the young soldier is doing his duty well, he has his reward, receives his pay.

I suppose that prayers are answered, that Sacraments are channels of grace given, that you get strength from your Master because you go to Him for it.

But it remains true, nevertheless—in so many instances—that there is no sunshine in your new religious life. There is an absence of what the Bible calls “joy and peace in believing.”

There is the calm resulting from the knowledge that you are doing your duty *and endeavouring to act up to your convictions.* But there is nothing else.

There is not even the satisfaction which follows on sins conquered and sins put to rout.

That, of course (though here, too, there is often a disappointment), for in the beginning of the religious life you cannot expect to have the fruits of a victory which can only be secured at its close.

But, beyond that, there is no pleasure in your religion ; no warmth or glow of the heart when you are repeating words of praise and adoration, words which saints and angels use with you, and which you feel must in their case spring out of the deeps of a rapture which you can intellectually grasp, but of which you have never had any personal experience.

You put the matter in the fewest words when you say, " My religion is so very cold and commonplace.

I am never moved by it as I am by so many other things.

There seems to me to be an utter want of life in it.

My heart feels frozen, and the curious thing is that it is only in religion that this is the case.

I wonder whether it is my fault or my misfortune ?

And what can I do to put more fervour and enthusiasm into my prayers and praises ?

I wish I knew, for religion is very disappointing to me."

Now, that is a very common complaint. And the first thing to be remembered is, that the dullness and deadness of which you complain may be the effect of more causes than one.

Sometimes, a naturally cold and lethargic temperament will aggravate and complicate this coldness and lethargy of the spirit.

Sometimes there is a cause which is *not* always suspected. One's religion

may be less real than one imagines ; there may be some cherished sin, or pursuit, or person, which is allowed to engross one's attention. " Son, give Me thine heart," is what the Master says always. And very often that is just what is not given. Everything else is freely offered : time, intellect, money, trouble, hard work even ; but one's heart ? No, or only the remnants of it. The bulk of it is where one's treasure is, wherever that may be. And that is often something quite earthly.

Well, the remedy in such a case as this is too obvious to need more being said about it.

But if none of these causes exist, and it still remains that, like Mariana, who

" Could not look on the sweet heaven
Either at morn or eventide " ;

who

" Only said, I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead ;"

—if it still remains that your heart feel cold, and your life is colourless, and your religion is a matter of conviction indeed, but is the source of no active fervour, and no vivid enthusiasm, then what shall be said to you ?

“Is it your fault?” No ; I think not. It is GOD’s will ; it certainly is not yours.

Then first say, “God’s will be done.” That is always hard to say ; never harder than when you are lonely and desolate, and disappointed of your earliest hopes.

But it has to be said—and felt. And then, I think, you might kneel down and pray. Pray for the dawn.

It is night in your soul. Dark and cold are the hours just before the uprising of the sun. It is night, and you are on the mountains, alone and weary with watching, and you are helpless. You have done what you could. All that you can do for GOD you have done (I am sup-

posing that), and it is of no avail beyond a certain point.

You have, indeed, what help and strength is absolutely needful for your spiritual life, but no more. The necessities of religion are given, but its luxuries are denied. That is your plaint.

Yes. Now, it may seem harsh and unsympathetic to say that this is good for you ; that it is an unmixed blessing.

But it is. It is good for every soul to be subjected to the hardships of the spiritual life. It is good for one to be exposed to the cold, bracing atmosphere which surrounds you when religion offers you no pleasures whatever, except those which come from the simple performance of obvious duty.

It is good to be troubled by the total absence of all spiritual delights. It is good to be left alone face to face with your work, and to go on doing that every day without any reward save that of a clear conscience.

But still you may pray. And for what? Pray that in the LORD's good time you, too, may have your momentary vision of GOD. When that comes, you will suddenly have what you long for.

And how suddenly it comes! And always how unexpectedly!

Sometimes it comes as it came to the child Samuel. He had been doing his work regularly and steadily. And I suppose it was like all work of the sort: monotonous enough, and not specially interesting when the novelty of it was over. And suddenly, in the middle of a dark night, GOD spoke to him.

Don't you think that the house of the LORD was a very different place to him ever after that night? I do. I feel sure that every step he took, every word he spoke in that place where he had heard the voice of GOD must have been full of *an inexpressible pleasure to him, child as*

he was. The place was full of GOD ever afterwards to him.

But it may be said that GOD does not so reveal Himself now. No. Not so ; but in so many other ways.

Do you remember, for example, in the story of the Two Voices, how a vision of GOD came to the saddened heart of the man whose previous life had been just such a dark and cold one as those which I have been describing ?

It came one Sunday morning ; the story is too long to tell, and the words in which it is told are too beautiful to mar by curtailment.

But suddenly, one Sunday morning, as he watched a happy family group wending its way through the country lanes to the village church, the cloud which had hitherto darkened his life vanished. Why and how it had happened he could not tell. All that he *could say* was that a change had come

over his soul. Whereas he was spiritually blind, now he saw. "So," he says—

"So forth into the fields I went,
And Nature's living motion lent
The pulse of hope to discontent.

So variously seemed all things wrought,
I marvelled how the mind was brought
To anchor by one gloomy thought ;

And wherefore rather I made choice
To listen to the barren voice,
Than Him that said, 'Rejoice, rejoice.'"

Yes, the change was complete.

The burden was lifted from his heart. Heaviness had endured for the night, but joy had come in the morning. And this changed way of looking at the circumstances of life was the result, not of any mental process of thought, but of a sudden and unexpected spiritual vision of God.

In a moment the long-desired grace had come from heaven, and thenceforward his religious life was as bright and

warm as it had been cold and dark and un comforted.

I have said that we may pray for this change, if it is greatly longed for in any given instance.

If there is any life out of which the sunshine is departed, and that for no known cause—not because of cherished sins, or wilful pampering of melancholy ; but if that life is simply dark and sorrowful, and religion brings no joy to the heart, and no light to the eyes, then indeed there is nothing for it but to kneel down and pray that when the LORD wills, the cloud may be rolled away, and you too may have your instantaneous and all-sufficing vision of GOD.

In conclusion, I would add just two things. First, that there are many minds—the majority, perhaps—who are quite unconscious of the presence or absence of such feelings as those of which I have been speaking, and who have

therefore a difficulty in sympathising with them, or even in understanding their existence.

But, nevertheless, such feelings do exist, and are very real, and you cannot read the record of any inner life without meeting with them.

They are the lights and shadows of all religious biography in all ages of the world, and are the precise facts which redeem the religious life from a dull level of monotonous uniformity.

But, lastly, the practical point of the matter is this: that religious joy is utterly unessential to the growing life of the student in the school of CHRIST.

Its presence does not imply any special knowledge of religious truth, or even any special possession of religious faith. You find it in minds of the most varied sorts, of every creed, of every age, and of every station.

And so its absence does not signify

the absence of faith or of knowledge. Religious joy, "the joy and peace of believing," is simply one of God's good gifts, which He gives or withholds as seemeth Him best, and for reasons which are sufficient, and into which we need not attempt to penetrate.

Enough for every Christian soul it is to know that he is on the right track to heaven; that he is plodding his way steadily onwards in the narrow road which leads home. What the weather is, is not important. Sunshine or rain comes as God chooses, and He knows best what is best for us. Pray for sunshine if you long for it, but remember that it is not a necessity of your earthly pilgrimage. The necessity, the one thing needful, is to go on.

Strengthened as you are by the Bread of Life, go forward in the power of that sacramental food. Day by day do your *day's march*. That is necessary; *nothing*

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else is. Let the winds blow, and the clouds gather, and the rain fall, as the LORD wills. Leave that to Him. Enough for you, if at the end of each day you are one day's march nearer home.

For in that better land there are no cloud-shadows ; there is no darkness, no sorrow. There, once for all, the Day-Star rises ; the true Sun shines out in all His glory.

So the saints of GOD rejoice for ever in heaven, because there, and there only, cometh the realisation of all longings, the peaceful fruition of an eternal vision of GOD.



VI.—WITH THE LORD JESUS.*



AM going to begin my sermon with a story instead of with a text.

I have before my mind a picture, the scene of the story, which I want you to see as clearly as I now see it.

You must have seen such a picture before, either in reality, or in a book, or in a picture-gallery. At any rate, if you have not seen it, it is easy enough to imagine it.

If there is anything at all in my sermon, you will be able to say whether it is good for you ; whether it comes out of the Bible or not. And then you will be able to find a text, or, perhaps, many texts, which will fit it.

* A Christmas Sermon.

Now, I have in my mind's eye to-night a picture.

Imagine one of those grand old cathedrals which are scattered, like castles or fortresses, all over the world wherever Christians call themselves CHRIST'S servants and worshippers.

If you walked round the outside of it on a dark night when the moon has set, and the stars are mostly hidden by gathering clouds, you would see a vast black mass of stone between you and the sky. A buttress juts out into the night here ; there a battlement zigzags against a grey cloud ; there a cluster of pinnacles shoot up like larches in a wood. And, above all, the huge central tower soars into heaven ; and out of it, or out of heaven, silvery bells chime softly, and the great tenor booms the midnight hour with a hollow, reverberating roar like the voice of the sea among the rocks when *the* winds are out, and shipwrecked

sailors are going home to GOD.

Now the story goes that late one night there was a glimmer of light seen by the passers-by, flickering across the windows of this great building.

Let us imagine that we are entering in with some of the passers-by to see what caused the unusual light.

You know the large western doors of a cathedral? So vast and spacious are they made, to signify that all men can enter into the Church and be safe : and in the midst of them there is a little door, barely the size of one man, to show that strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth to life, and few there be that find it; none save those who look for it and will go in.

Now, imagine that you and I enter out of the dark night into the darkness of that great cathedral.

How still and hushed it is! You cannot see anything at first. By-and-

bye, a long, grey avenue of marble pillars grows up before you, like beech-boles in a winter's wood, with their roots in the ground, and their high-arched tops in the sky.

The floor is cold to your feet. You are treading on graves. Each pavement-stone is a monument, the mark of a departed saint. How many bodies lie there! God rest their souls in Paradise, and bring us and them to heaven.

But what has become of the flickering light which was seen from the outside? It is moving up and down slowly among the pillars of the cathedral, and the story goes on to say that it was only a lamp carried by; the sacristan or clerk, who has been to set something right for an early service, and is going home.

There he stops, just in front of the oaken rood-screen, and his lamp shines *upon a white figure, half kneeling, half*

cowering, in the shadow of the grim iron gates.

You will say I am long in getting at the end of my story. The white figure there is nothing but a little child who has lost herself, and has been shut in by accident, and is very cold and frightened.

That is what the sacristan thinks. He has children of his own at home, and he takes hold of the child's hand, and talks to her, half in kindness, half chidingly. For she ought not to be there at that time of night. "Who is she? What is she doing here?"

"They told me," she says, in little sobs; "they told me that the LORD JESUS comes here sometimes into this church, and that I should find Him if I came here.

And I came in this evening. And it got dark. And everyone went away. And the doors were locked. And I was *frightened*.

But He never came. And I have never seen Him. And I want to see Him so.

Please tell me, where is He ? ”

In my story I do not find that the sacristan tried to answer that question. I want you to give me an answer to the child's question. My brethren, can you?

That is what my sermon is about to-night.

Where is the LORD JESUS CHRIST ?

Some — many of you — must have asked the question at one time or another.

Why did you ask it ?

Did you want to see Him ?

How can I tell ?

But I suppose you have felt, as I have, utterly miserable at times—almost in despair. Everything is against you. You have tried hard to do right and to keep straight. But time after time you *have* gone wrong, and got wrong.

What is the matter is not to the point. Perhaps a quick, violent temper, which makes you angry, and wild, and savage, in an instant.

Or sullenness, which wraps one up in a cloud, and shuts out friends, and love, and God, for days.

Or some evil desire, which, when it is gratified, you hate as much as GOD hates it always.

Well, whatever it is, you are in slavery—a white slave in black chains.

What is the remedy?

Which remedies have you tried?

Prayers? Yes. Sometimes a man prays, and no one answers. Sermons? You listen, and it sounds well enough, but nothing comes of it. You hear good and true words, and plenty of them. Repentance? Faith? Conversion? You have heard all about these things. But you think sometimes that they don't *seem to do* you any good. Words are

they, and words they remain. And no man is saved by words.

What is it, then, that you want?

You know. We all know in those hard times what we want.

We want some one stronger than we are; stronger than our faith; stronger than our sins; stronger than the devil, who is always at the bottom of our misery.

We want a friend in need, a friend in deed. We want a hand in ours to lead us, eyes on ours to comfort us, a voice to say, "I forgive you; you are forgiven." We want another will in our hearts to strengthen our own weak wills, and make us able to say "No" at the critical moment. When the devil comes and suggests just the one thing which you would like to do and know you must not do, then you want a power in you to say, "Avaunt, tempter. Get thee behind me, Satan. Go, and leave me alone, in the name of God."

Yes, my brethren, we want JESUS CHRIST.

That is all we want.

Have you found Him ?

I wonder whether you are thinking, "Well, this is a strange question to be put to us from this pulpit by a priest of the Church. Surely, the preacher knows that we are Christians. We have been brought to the Church in baptism. The cross of water has been marked on our foreheads. The Holy Spirit has descended into our souls. We are all members of CHRIST, children of GOD, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Of course we have found CHRIST."

Yes, of course you have, thank GOD.

But that was long ago, and you may have lost Him since that, for all I know.

Even our LORD's blessed mother once lost her Son, and sought Him sorrowing.

You remember that story ?

And where did she find Him again?

Do you remember that?

She found Him where the child in my story was looking for Him—in the Temple.

And when she found Him, she took Him home with her, and lived with Him ever afterwards.

Now do you see what I am driving at?

I mean this. It is not enough to have been put into the way of salvation unless we are going that way always.

It is not enough to have had CHRIST's arms around you once. Unless they are round you now, you are very miserable, whoever you are.

What you and I want, what we must have, is to have JESUS CHRIST with us always.

I will tell you what it is to have Him always with us.

It is to be able to refer every thought we think and every action we do to Him. If there is the least doubt as to whether *this* or *that* is right, you ask Him. If

you are in trouble, your first idea is, "It does not much matter; He will help me." If you go wrong, you say, "This is terrible. What will He think? I know He will forgive me, but I cannot bear to grieve Him so."

If you have a happy life and many friends, you are always thanking Him for His kindness to you.

He is a real Friend, a real Person, just as real as your father or your brother is. You have read about Him, and thought about Him, and knelt to Him, and spoken to Him, so often, that you have no more doubt of His reality than you have of your own.

Now, have you got that knowledge into your head and heart?

There is only one way in which it can be done.

It is done by coming to Him when He calls you. What you have heard

to-night, brethren, you might have heard just as well elsewhere.

There is no preacher of the Gospel who would not say very much what I have said to you.

Barring, perhaps, a sentence or two about Baptism, I have said nothing which you might not hear in any church, or, for the matter of that, in any dissenting chapel in England.

There is a good deal in this. It is a great thing if we can begin upon any subject with a good, general agreement all round.

But now I want you to go a step further. Every preacher will invite you to come to CHRIST. But if any preacher cannot, or will not, tell you more than that, it is high time for the people to ask him a question or two.

“How are we to come to CHRIST?”

“Where shall we be likely to find Him?”

The answers are simple: you must

come to Him in His temple, and you will find Him in His Sacrament.

No doubt, the child in my story got these answers to her question before she grew up to the full strength of her womanhood. Some good friend, I am sure, took her by the hand, and led her again into that shadowy cathedral on a bright spring morning, and showed her the Altar of CHRIST, and told her that there was the earthly throne of JESUS ; that there she would find Him ; and in times of holy communion would know that she was one with Him, and that He Himself was in her.

Yes, brethren, you know this is so. In the stillness of the early morning hour, as you kneel in the gloaming before the Altar, where the flickering lights and the radiant cross tell of Him who is the Light and the Saviour of the world ; as you kneel there, and worship Him who is there, upon your hearts falls a great

calm, for JESUS Himself is there, and you have found Him, and He has given you peace.

To-night these are seasonable thoughts. There can be no true Christmas joy if you have not found CHRIST. Some mirth and merriment there may be, but no peace without CHRIST.

And in the coming year, with all that it is to bring us, what comfort can there be in trouble, what power in temptation, without CHRIST?

If you can find Him—only if you can find Him—will you be able to count upon that which we now pray for ourselves and all our friends—

“A happy Christmas and a bright
New Year.”

And, then, how different is this Church and its services, if we have once learnt how to find the LORD!

If it be true—as the child believed—that the LORD comes here, the whole

character of the place, each one of our own thoughts and actions, is changed.

We come to find Him. We come here with quiet footsteps, hushed voices, deep penitence, and utter humility. For we cannot come to meet Him, if we do not come so.

We come, and we find Him. Then what can we do but kneel down and worship Him? No teaching is required. Your own feelings are your best guides, and your own hearts tell you all that you need to be told.

And so there is no need to say what manner of a building this should be, or what kind of services should be held here.

If this is the LORD's temple, to which He comes; if that is His Altar, where He is found, there can be no cost too lavish, no adornments too careful, no reverence too great for Him.

“Say, why His house is vast and fair,
His Altar decked with pious care ;
The mystic lights of quivering fire ;
And then the trumpet-song of choir
To mellow organ’s pealing strain ;
The traceried window’s blazoned pane—
Say, why, with gems and shining gold,
Doth earth her purest wealth unfold ?”
“Because Thou gavest all for me,
We render all we can to Thee.
Though small our best, yet we believe
The gift of love Thou wilt receive.
And if in wealth we have no part,
We give Thee what we have—the heart.”*

Lastly, there may be some here who are with us, but not, perhaps, quite of us, who have not yet fully embraced the Catholic Faith.

They are not sure that in such a Church as this they will hear CHRIST preached.

Well, my brethren, what have you heard preached here to-night but CHRIST?

* Carols of French Flanders, by E. de Coussemaker.
Words by the Rev. S. Baring-Gould (the first eight lines slightly altered).

CHRIST from first to last. CHRIST in the cradle; CHRIST in the Sacrament; CHRIST on the Throne.

“CHRIST is the End, for CHRIST was the Beginning ;
CHRIST the Beginning, for the end is CHRIST.” *

Yes ; “ We preach CHRIST.” †
If you must have a text to-night, have that.

I cannot leave better words than S. Augustine’s behind me this Christmas-tide :—

“Follow CHRIST as your Pattern ; offer Him for your price ; receive Him for your Sacramental Food ; and wait for Him as your endless and exceeding great Reward.”

* “ Saint Paul ”—*F. W. H. Myers.*


† I. Cor. i. 23.



VII.—VIA CRUCIS, VIA LUCIS.

I. CORINTHIANS I. 18 :

"The Preaching of the Cross."

O-NIGHT'S * special subject is
"the teaching of the Catholic
Church in the pulpit."

It is so vast a topic, covers such a tract of ground, extends over so many ages, touches so much thought, appeals to such an infinity of feeling, that it would be hopeless to think of dealing with it here, were it not all summed up and embalmed in the five words of the text—

"The Preaching of the Cross."

I want you to think of that to-night ; of the pith and essence of preaching, rather than of the manner, the manner-

* A Sunday in Advent.

isms, the failures, the successes, the anatomy, or the history of it.

You see there are two sides to this question of preaching—the human side and the Divine side.

Preachers may be divided into many classes,—the spiritual ; the intellectual ; the practical ; the preacher with wings ; the preacher in fetters ; the preacher in his groove ; the preacher who is hopeless of results, and so never has any ; the casual preacher, who says whatever comes uppermost, which is froth and scum ; the idle preacher, who will talk, but will not read or think ; and the average preacher, who can do most things fairly well, except preach.

So hearers are sub-divisible into curious hearers, who love to hear anything and do nothing ; critical hearers, who know too much ; sceptical hearers, who know too little ; eager, docile, and devout hearers, who are like bees, and

always contrive to get something good out of the most unpromising sources of food.

Then, again, what stirring pictures might not be drawn of the sermons of old !

S. Paul, in the sunlight, on Mars' Hill ; the keen arrows of his living words glancing off hearts harder and colder than the living marbles which surrounded them.

S. Chrysostom, holding perpetual multitudes spell-bound by dint of sheer will and fire.

S. Francis, who preached so patiently, and with such special knowledge of men's hearts and wants, that history lapses into parable, and tells us how the very birds and fish thronged to the magic of his voice and eye.

And then what a curious chapter is that which tells of the different styles *and methods* which have been prevalent

and customary at different times !

The subtle, wire-drawn argumentativeness of one period ; the gay and gorgeous rhetoric of another ; the sledgehammer vehemence and downrightness of a third ; the endless theological diatribes of the last century ; and the terse, conversational, face to face, addresses of modern times, when everything (even theology sometimes) is made to give way to the paramount necessity of driving something good into the hearts and lives of the listening people.

Yes, it is a tempting subject, is preaching, looked at from its human side, for it touches the world-old difficulty of getting a man's mind and soul out of himself into the minds and souls of other men.

Of this I will just say one passing word to lead to the chief point of our thoughts to-night.

Do you know how you can get good out of a sermon ? Well, I will tell you—

pray the prayer which every preacher should pray before he begins, pray that he who is to speak to you may be no less or more than a sheet of transparent glass, through which some ray of the white light of God's truth shall flash out into the deeps of your soul.

In all sermons let all men, preacher and hearers alike, strive to forget all that is merely personal, human, transient, and earthly, and look for that ray of Divine power which can pass through all material obstacles and warm and illuminate any man's heart. That only is a good sermon here through which it has pleased God Himself to say something good to you.

And so I come to pass over the human side of preaching, and to speak only of that which is Divine—that of which the text speaks when it condenses all sermons into this phrase of God's, "the preaching of the Cross."

Those of us who have travelled ever

so little beyond the cold glaciers of our insular habits and prejudices, remember that in most pulpits of the Catholic Church abroad there stands a Cross, which, in accordance with S. Paul's commentary of "we preach Christ crucified," bears the image of the crucified Son of God.

It does not face the people—it has not, in the pulpit, a message for them. It speaks only to the preacher, whosoever he may be. It whispers perpetually to him, "Remember Me."

Aye, and how thankful shall we be, often enough, to have that reminder in front of the pulpits of the Catholic Church in this land of ours. Often and often when the preacher, good man, wanders away into a wilderness of moral platitudes, or word-splitting and brain-splitting subtleties of controversial dogma which no man ever did or ever will comprehend ; or, more evil still, when in the

heat of argumentative opposition, that charity is forgotten without which there is no religion because there is no GOD, how often would we be but too thankful to place silently before the impassioned or lethargic orator that white figure of our loving LORD, through whose motionless lips should breathe those all-transforming words, "Remember Me, preach Me, tell the people about Me; say that through one life-long immortal day I hung passionful on the black Cross of doom and pleaded for them, and died for them, and called them all to come to Me. Tell them that—Preach the Cross. Preach CHRIST Crucified. Preach GOD."

Yes, to "the preaching of the Cross" only, dares the Catholic Church devote her myriad pulpits—pulpits of stone to denote CHRIST the stricken rock whence flows all grace and mercy, CHRIST the corner stone of the temple of faith and devotion; pulpits of wood to speak of

CHRIST dying for all on the rack of the Cross, and feeding all from the fruit-bearing tree of the Cross.

All pulpits are vacant, all sermons void, if CHRIST be not the one theme and object—if it be not with us as it was with that great Apostle who was sent to preach to us, and teach all nations that of all things, earthly and spiritual, “the beginning and the end is CHRIST.”

Place before your eyes then, my brethren, to-night the figure of the Crucified whom the Church Catholic preaches, stretched on the Cross, the preaching of which is the one object of all Catholic desire and effort.

Try and learn from the sight of it that which no words can tell so well.

See, first, the humility of it. To do that you must see its humiliation.

Because of CHRIST, because of our knowledge of Him and our love for Him, we seldom realize the degradation of a

real Cross. It is to us, naturally now, a mark of respect and an object of esteem, no form is more honoured or honourable. "GOD forbid," cries S. Paul, "that I should glory save in the Cross." And so we forget what it was in remembering what it is.

But we know that it was the means of the punishment of the lowest and worst of criminals. It was simply that which the gallows is. To come to that was the worst and most shameful fate which could befall a man.

Our LORD did not come to it. He went to it. Of His own accord, for His own wise and good purpose He placed Himself under its hateful and accursed shadow.

And it was not merely as if He had come voluntarily out of the poverty and obscurity of His cottage home and His country village and His association with the ignorant and the uncouth and the

vile, to such a bitter end as the Cross.

But voluntarily He came out of heaven to that—out of the shining splendour and the impenetrable glory of the Home of God—out of all its quietude, and all its knowledge, and all its holiness, and all its certainty, and all its peace—came down to the utter misery and degradation, and insignificance, and desolation of such a death as that—to die as an evil man would die. The contrast is too vast and woeful to be realised.

But you see one side of it here when you see the white, wan figure dying on the black, blood-reeking Cross.

Do you see that it means humility, perfect humility, going from the highest to the lowest place of one's own accord for others' sake ?

And do you see the double reason of this ? the one that without it there would have been no salvation for us, for that He should be with men, and should

be as men (sin excepted), and those, the worst of sinful men, who had to be saved, was part of the eternal counsel of God.

And the other that it might teach us what humility is, and how we can only help others by coming down to them, not to their sins, but to the level of their lives. You know what sympathy can do, how it can help, and soothe, and save as nothing else can. Yes—but you do not know what it is till you have knelt at the foot of the Cross and learnt it from CHRIST there.

Then next—

Look at the Cross again.

See how, as the Crucified One hangs in the pallor and chill of death, the once warm life-blood clings and clots around His five sacred and mystical wounds.

Those four glorious wounds in His holy hands and feet, which have been compared to the four mighty rivers

springing from the Garden of GOD to enrich the whole known world with their plentiful and fertilising flood.

That one last wound close to His heart, whence came the symbolising water and blood, which told alike of His death and its consequences—how from Him alone came the two greater sacraments of the Font and Altar, necessary to all, efficacious for all, means of union with Him in death and life:—in the death of the Cross, and in the life beyond the cross ;—the life of the Saints saved by the eternal sacrifice of the sinless life of CHRIST.

Have you learnt enough from the Cross to-night, brethren ? Aye, enough to live by, and to die with, and to live with again in the heavenly life that never dies ?

But I want you to look at the Cross again. Just once more, now.

See how the arms of JESUS are stretched out—stretched out wide on either side

—white and wide and outstretched—
wide as the world.

Yes, that is what they mean.

It is the attitude of all-embracing love.
It is the token, the assurance of universal salvation.

“Come,” He so cries, “Come to Me, one and all.” Man by man He calls us out of the thorns and the mire of the world to come to Him, and believe in Him, and be cleansed by Him, and be saved by Him.

Not one is left out—there is no one here, or anywhere, too deeply steeped in sin, and too foully stained by lust, and too far gone in sheer recklessness of living, to be called, and to be saved.

That is the Advent Gospel. Were it not for that call, could any one dare to approach Him, ever? Could any hope for pity at the last as the smoke of the burning world goes up and is consumed

in the white heat of the Judgment Throne of GOD ?

But that which He says to one, He says to all—"Come."

Will you not come then ?

Will you not come to Him now that you may ? Come to Him on earth as He is veiled mercifully in the Sacrament of the Altar, that so you may be cleansed, and strengthened, and guided, and led by sure and safe steps to the steps of the higher Throne, where for the penitent there is peace ; and for the weary, rest ; and for the saint, the endless light of heaven.

And, lastly, see the love in those outstretched arms of JESUS.

Within their magic, mystic circle, He fain would hold the whole world—the vast, innumerable family of God.

One brotherhood is there contained. Of all nations, and races, and minds, and needs, and sins ; yet, when there—

safe in the arms of JESUS—they are but one.

One in Faith, Hope, and Charity.

One in CHRIST.

That is the Christmas Gospel, to which these darkening Advent days so swiftly lead us all ; the yearly message of peace, of unity in GOD through JESUS.

Ah, brethren, let us heed it more than we do.

Known are we as children of our dear Master by this mark only—by our mutual love.

“By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples,” He said, “if ye love one another.”

Not so do men always deal with their religion, or use their vaunted Christianity.

Look into the world around you, and you will see the wordiest professors of the One Faith—what ? at peace ? Nay, at war, internecine war, one against

another. Persecutors of their brethren, dragging them from court to court, from court to prison, from prison to poverty ; aye, and that, GOD forgive them, in the name of the loving GOD.

Look a little longer, and you will see the brethren, what ? gathering together with outstretched arms of amity and union ? Nay, but sternly closing the very Altar-gates one against another, so that you and I in other parts of our Catholic Church would be forced to set up Altars of our own, because we should be debarred from the communion of the saints at the rightful Altar of our common LORD and GOD.

By this shall men know that Christians are CHRIST's disciples ?

No, not by this ; not by that debris of earth which still clings to these strong hearts of ours ; not by our discord, and variance, and exclusiveness, and distrust, and disunion.

But by the LOVE of JESUS.

By that *humility* of His, which led Him to the felon's Cross.

By that *self-sacrifice* of His, which wounded Him with the hands of His friends.

By that all-embracing *charity* of His, which stretched out His worn and wasted arms wide enough to gather all the world within His own embrace.

By that trumpet-tongued, silvery voice of His which from the Cross calls you, calls me ; which leaves none forgotten, and none forlorn.

By that insatiable *thirst* of His, which craves for every wandering soul.

And by that soft *compassion*, which gathers us up, one by one, and places us side by side ; and then leads us hand in hand like little children—children tired and naughty, and yet forgiven, because sorry—leads us, so, all together, home to GOD.

VIII.—THE GREAT HEREAFTER.

EPHESIANS VI. 18 :

“All Saints.”

AT this time of the year, we are brought face to face with a subject on which most men think more than they speak.

It is that of our hereafter—“the Great Hereafter” we call it, because it is the longest space of life of which we know anything. It will last for ever.

What is it? What will it be like? Where shall we live when this life is over? What do we know now about the future life, which will never come to an end?

I said that we are made to think about these questions.

That is so, of course, because we are come to the Eve of the Festival of All Saints.

Now if All Saints' Day has never made a man think of the future life, it must be because he has never clearly understood what that day means.

And the reason why there is much misunderstanding about its meaning is that in common modern talk we use the word Saint to signify a specially holy person, like S. Matthew, S. Paul, and so on.

If, then, the words "All Saints" are taken to mean merely such exceptionally holy and exalted personages, it is not likely that the Feast of All Saints will remind us specially of our own hereafter, and of that of our own personal friends and acquaintances. But the words really have a much wider meaning, and it is necessary to give them the wider meaning at this time for a good practical reason.

In former years there were two festivals which came together at this period of the year—All Saints' Day on November 1, and All Souls' Day on November 2.

When that was so it was possible, and perhaps convenient, to think of the greater Saints on the first day, and of the lesser Saints on the second day.

But now that All Souls' Day is removed from our calendar, the Feast of All Saints has to do duty for both. The two notions have to be combined, the two divisions thrown into one ; and so we are now thrown back on the ancient Catholic meaning of the word Saint, with which every careful reader of the Bible must be fully acquainted.

In its widest sense, the term Saint is applied all through Old and New Testaments to all persons who were professed members of the Church, and lived and died in that communion. David speaks

of the assembly of the Saints. S. Matthew of the bodies of the Saints which arose at the crucifixion. Ananias of the Saints persecuted by Saul. S. Paul addresses most of his letters to the Saints in such and such a place.

In these and many other passages the word Saint evidently does not mean only a person of exceptional holiness and rank, but includes also all baptised persons living and dying as consistent Church people in the faith and fear of the LORD.

The word is also used in the Revelation in the restricted sense of a great Saint, as a Martyr, or an Apostle ; but that does not affect the fact of which I speak, that in its wider sense it is all-embracing, and may include us and ours, as well as S. Stephen or S. John.

So in the special service for All Saints' Day the Holy Gospel speaks of all who try to live up to our LORD's teaching on

the Mount, as Saints ; and the Collect unites all Churchmen in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of CHRIST our LORD.

Therefore, the Feast of All Saints is not only a commemoration of the holiest and most exalted of the servants of God, but it is a day which comes home to all the servants of God. It not only draws aside the veil which separate us from the past hierarchy of the Church, from Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Fathers, and Teachers, but it unites us with all the faithful, living and departed, in every age and region of the Church.

If you realise, then, the wider meaning of the word Saint, you must be thinking at this time of the year of countless myriads of brethren whom you cannot see ; some of them, it may be, your own nearest and dearest, who though parted from you by the process which we call death, are yet joined with

you in the unity of the Church, are waiting elsewhere for you—for you who must suffer the change which they have borne, and who hope to go and meet them in that place whither they have departed.

That is, roughly, the most obvious thought which flashes across us at this time.

Now it is a little vague and indefinite this—is it not ?

Is it possible then to know more about the hereafter than this ? We long to know more. Can we do so ? At the time of the coming Feast of All Saints, the question we naturally ask is, in the fewest words—

“ After death—what ? ”

There are, apparently, but two methods of arriving at an answer.

Either you must reason out the subject for yourself, or you must search for *and* accept whatever GOD has been

pleased to tell us about it in the Bible ; and I need not add that you may combine both methods, and will do so if you are anxious to arrive at all that may be known about the matter.

Reason, apart from revelation, has always pointed out that the immortality of the soul is at least probable.

The educated and civilised portion of the old world which knew not Christianity, believed that the soul would not altogether die. I need not quote the poets and writers of Greece and Rome to prove this statement.

It would have been unreasonable of them to believe otherwise. It is unreasonable to suppose that a man could long to live on in a better and more lasting world, were there no such a condition. Whence would he devise any notions of a future, were there none ? Those longings could not have been made by himself. Only the Power

who made all things would have made those shadowing intimations of a vast hereafter which are the common heritage of all reasoning men.

The second mode of proof is based on Revelation—Revelation being that which God tells a man in words.

There may have been other Revelations than ours—but for us, Revelation means the truths which God has taught us by the Bible, and (as S. Paul says) also by the tradition of the Church.

Now what does the Church, with the open Bible in her hand, teach us about our hereafter? What have we been told will happen “after death”? Life up to death we know, and death we know, but “after death what?” When the change comes—when the eyes glaze, and the tongue fails, and the heart stops—what will happen then? What next?

We know by experience that the body, the outer form, remains for a little while

where it was, but it is so altered in an instant that we feel it is but a relict. He whose will made it to do as he willed is gone—

Now where ?

Well, what did our LORD say of this ? He said to a dying man who was doing his best at his last (and perhaps his first) opportunity of faith and obedience, “to-night thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.”

That must have meant at least this—that the penitent was to be with our LORD as soon as his spirit parted from his body, he was to be out of the terrors and troubles and trials of this world, and to be in the place where our LORD rested and worked—was therefore necessarily to be in a place of happiness and safety.

Till when ?

All we are told of that is contained in numberless passages of the Bible. We therefore know that a day will come

when the parted soul shall be reunited to the body—the same body, with added powers and perfections.

It is called a spiritual body because the spirit of a man is no longer fettered and impeded by it. Our LORD's Body after His resurrection is an instance of its conditions. He was, to outward sight, the same man, but no longer subjected to the barriers and hindrances of earth, could go and pass whence He would, was no longer liable to temptation, pain, or any trouble.

So spiritualised, perfected, and immortal, the Saints will rise, and pass onwards into Heaven, and there reign, and love, and worship—and know no more change, death, parting—but be for ever happy, and with GOD.

That, we know, is the great hereafter of those who die in the faith and in the fear of the LORD—with sins repented, *confessed*, pardoned, and washed away

by the merits of the spotless sacrifice of the once dead CHRIST.

So much GOD has been pleased to tell us.

Do we ask to know more ?

Yes. I suppose we ask many more questions.

We wish often to know what will happen to those who have lived mediocre lives—who without being actual criminals, have been habitually self-indulgent, careless, and have delayed complete repentance till there was no time for aught but an agonised cry for mercy ;—perhaps not even for that.

Is there another chance for them ?

In the place of departed spirits, may they be admitted to a lowest place, and allowed to rise by degrees of purification to the standard which they never attained here ?

Must they be classed with the utterly

evil, the wilfully unbelieving, the worst criminals, and be lost for ever ?

There are many mansions, and stages, and ranks in heaven, we are told. Is it unreasonable to infer that there are the same distinctions in the spirit-land, and that the progress towards perfection which has been commenced on earth will be completed hereafter, in all cases where there has been no wilful rejection of the message of the Gospel, no denial of the power of the atoning sacrifice of the Cross ?

Then, further, as to our connection with the departed Saints who are in Paradise. How many questions we ask about this !

We are not told much.

But, in the first place, we are plainly told to pray for them.

In the passage of the text, for example, we are told to make supplications for *all* Saints, which, as we have seen, in-

cludes the departed as well as the living.

That is an unspeakable comfort, is it not? As we live on, we lose so many. One after another vanishes into the silent land, and we are left desolate and lamenting. They are gone for awhile beyond our bodily reach.

“O for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still.”

But they are not gone beyond the reach of our spirits. Our souls reach theirs in prayer and praise. Still, as before, we may commend them to the love and mercy of God. Still, as before, our prayers for them are ordered, and therefore are answered. Still, our hopes, our aims, our aspirations, are one and undivided. Still, in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, we are united with them in the very presence of JESUS.

Then they pray for us? Yes, surely; otherwise they cannot pray, which is

incredible ; or else they do not care for us any more, which is impossible.

“If,” says one of the Christian Fathers, “if the saints, while still in the body, are able to pray for others . . . shall their power be less after they have begun to be with CHRIST ?”

Then, may we ask for their prayers ? That is another question often in our minds. Will they know if we ask them, can they hear us ? That is the difficulty. We are not told that this is so.

But this we do know, that in all the early Christian devotions, at times of the Celebration of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, petitions were offered to GOD by the living church, that the prayers of the departed saints for us might be united with our prayers for them, and that we with them might be heard for the sake of the adorable sacrifice of the all-loving and merciful Son of GOD.

That is primitive, Catholic, and so

reliable. And it adheres to our instinct, and satisfies our cravings.

No one here, probably, will say that since CHRIST is an Almighty Intercessor, we need no others.

You do not give up praying for your own children on that account.

Neither do we wish to lose the prayers of our departed brethren because CHRIST pleads for us.

If "All Saints" are really one, they must be one in prayer. That is essential.

I have touched on the personal side of this great subject because I want to bring the matter home. Religion is quite useless if it does not rend our hearts, and affect our prayers, our worship, our communions.

Let me add, if it does not affect our daily life in every respect.

Think of yourself, yourself only, for a moment in conclusion.

The change is coming to you. When, no one knows.

Just as this sluggish river of ours rose out of its banks last Tuesday,* quite unexpectedly, and in a few hours and in the dead of the night became a roaring torrent of destruction, devastation, and loss, so it will, it must be with you.

The Death Angel will rise up before you, and put his hand on your heart, and you must go.

And we know that we are settling our hereafter now ; that the quietness and the peace of the future life in Paradise hangs on the present faith and obedience ; that the saintly place in heaven is an equivalent of the saintly place on earth ; and that for the wilfully faithless and evil there is but one condemnation, and no ground of hope.

Then is there any change needed to fit you for the great change ?

* *The great Flood of October 24, 1882.*

If there is, make it now, now that you can.

Is there anything wrong in any life here? Confirmation vows forgotten, communions neglected, prayers left unsaid? Yes, of course there is.

Are there no sins, unrepented, still committed daily? We know there are.

Will you resolve to turn over the page to-night? You can, now. Will you?

Ah yes, surely, if you really wish for re-union with all you have loved and lost; if you really care for JESUS and heaven.

See that Altar.

It is the gate of God.

If you care for Him, you will come there with sins confessed, repented, pardoned. You will come with longings and resolves to live the life of CHRIST; you will come there to CHRIST; you will not separate yourself from All Saints,

either on earth or heaven ; you will pray there for all your brethren, you will ask for their prayers, you will pray for yourself ; and you will gain from God through JESUS all you want : union and unity, strength and peace.

Here is the key which unlocks all the mysteries of both the worlds.

It is because JESUS reigns on His Altar throne that we can worship Him here, in the blessed company of all saints and all angels. It is because JESUS comes to us here—is the link between us and all saints everywhere—that we can say of His Altar-shrine whenever we come to worship Him here—

This is Beth-any, the place of song.

This is Beth-lehem, the place of food.

This is Beth-EL, the place of God.

Deo Soli Gloria :

Amen.





